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SUBJECT: BRAZZAVILLE IN BRIEF - JULY 25, 2008

¶1. Embassy Brazzaville is an unclassified post.

¶2. Kouilou region asks for forgiveness: A delegation of government leaders who represent the Pointe Noire-Kouilou area in their legislative duties, led by the Minister of Hydrocarbons Taty Loutard, presented themselves to President Denis Sassou-Nguesso to apologize for the recent incident in Pointe Noire and to assure the president it would not happen again. The president responded, not with forgiveness, but with an African proverb that translates to: "when the rats in the garden want the cheese in the house, it is the mice in the house which show them the way in," alluding to the fact that he was fully aware of the people who were behind the incident. The president also pointed out that when he and Mrs. Sassou-Nguesso entered the ceremony, no one in the congregation stood up to show them the proper respect. He reminded the delegation of how much he assisted the deceased during his time of illness and that he has always shown preferential treatment to the needs of Pointe Noire.

¶3. Independent news reporter arrested and detained: Christian Perrin, a reporter for an independent television station in Pointe Noire, was arrested by the Direction de Surveillance du Territoire (DST) and detained for one night at the police station in Pointe Noire. He was charged with attempting to incite a riot. Perrin had filmed the July 5 riot in which stones were thrown at the President's motorcade during the burial of Thystere Tchicaya (see reftel). Perrin's station, Tele Pour Tous, showed footage of the incident on the local station in Pointe Noire in spite of the government's directive not to do so. On July 20, Perrin invited two opposition party members to discuss the recent local elections on the air, and Perrin was arrested the following morning. Upon his release he reported that he had not been mistreated by the DST, merely targeted for broadcasting the footage on television. Approximately 30 people have been arrested and detained for the July 5 incident. Liberti sans frontieres reports that one detainee, Guy Poaty, died from wounds suffered during torture by the DST. Post has been unable to confirm.

¶4. Yet another death among the government elite: Marcel Dzangui Ombissa, a senator and member of the presidential majority, died while presenting a speech at Parliament on maternal mortality. This is the seventh death of a high-ranking government leader since May 2007.

¶5. Getting organized for the elections: Leaders of The Rassemblement pour la Majoriti Prisidentielle(RMP), which is composed of 82 political parties that support President Sassou-Nguesso, are discussing the need to develop one major political party prior to the 2009 presidential elections, claiming that one strong political party would assure the President's re-election in the first round of voting. Meanwhile, another candidate has thrown his hat in the ring: Anguios Nganguia-Engmbi, a customs officer, who stated that although he has parted ways with the president's political party, PCT, he will not resign his membership in the party, and will run as an independent candidate even though his party is part of the RMP.

¶6. Italians interested in producing bio fuel and shoes: Fri-el

Green has been granted 40,000 hectares of Congolese land for the next 30 years to produce bio fuel and palm oil, with the stipulation that the company will begin to set up its enterprise by September and be in full production mode by February 2009. Italian-owned Euroscarpa announced a plan to develop a shoe factory in RoC. The factory will hire 150 to 200 Congolese for a daily production of 500 shoes.

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